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ART NEEDLEWORK

TABLE-CLOTH BORDERS.



NOTHING for table-cloth decoration is so desirable as a border. If the ornament cover the top of the table, it is likely to be injured, or the table will be rendered useless. As to material, a soft woollen that is not very rough and will hang well is the best. Serges and diagonal cloths take the richest as well as the simplest ornament. Linen and flaxen materials should not be used. They slip uneasily about the table, and stick out instead of hanging down. Two yards square is the usual size of a cloth; but for the fashionable little five-o'clock tea-tables it is best to use the width of the stuff square.

A border worked in one color and one or two shades of filoseal will look well if the silk harmonize in color with the ground. A border of flowers, alternate cowslip and primrose, like our illustration, is simple and beautiful. We give the detail of the flowers and bottom band the full size for working. The reduced model will be found all that is necessary for the rest. Moss or myrtle green serge may be used for the table-cloth. The contrasting shades of the deep yellow cowslip and the pale primrose will be very pleasant. The centre of the leaves should be darker than the edges. The border will look best with the line worked in dark brown wool, and the primrose in pale silk. All the primrose and the cowslip flowers should be done in silk, but the leaves should be in wool. The stalks of primroses have a pinkish-purple tint.

A good table-cloth decoration is a band of velvet worked with a pattern and sewn on to the cloth. The band should not be close to the edge, or it will look as if it were needed to enlarge the cloth. This velvet may be of two colors in short alternate lengths, and the ornament on it counter-changed, as blue on green, and green on blue alternately, which on a green or blue cloth has a good appearance. This counter-changing of the color of ornament and ground is much employed in several of the decorative arts, and might well be more extensively used in needlework than it is; the chief danger in its use is that the contrasts of color are too cutting.

The general subject of table-cloth decoration was treated at some length in *THE ART AMATEUR* of last October.



VIOLET FOR NEEDLEWORK.

EMBROIDERY IN CHINA.

RECENT English traveller thus graphically describes the art of embroidery in China:

"For twenty-two 'cash,' or 'tseen,' I purchased an elegant book filled with choice subjects of the graphic art as patterns for the use of the young needlewoman. She is assumed to be poor, and hence the little manual is printed at about one penny of our money. It has a cover of a fair yellow, studded with spangles of gold, and contains between two and three hundred figures culled from the various stores of nature and art. In fact, the objects are so well selected and so numerous that they might serve as illustrations to a small encyclopædia. One acquainted with Chinese literature and natural history might deliver several lectures with

this book before him. The meadow, the grove, the brook, the antiquary's museum, and the pages of mythology, with the adornments of the house and garden, are all laid under contribution.

"The book is said to be for the use of the person who belongs to the green window—which is an epithet for the dwelling of a poor woman; while the red gallery denotes the residence of a rich female. The industrious poor plies her task near the green lattice, which is made of earthenware and lets in both the light and the breath of heaven; while the rich dame leans upon the vermeil-tinted balusters of the gaudy veranda, and gazes carelessly at the sunbeams as they sparkle among the flowers. The title-page presents us with a venerable man



CORNFLOWER FOR NEEDLEWORK.

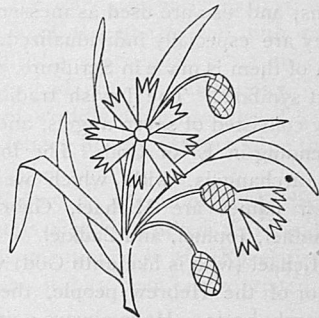
in the weeds of office, holding in his hand a scroll with this motto: 'Heaven's magistrate confers wealth.' Over his head are bats disporting among the clouds; the emblems, I suppose, of wakefulness—for these animals are on the alert while men sleep.

"I once saw two girls at this work in the village of Mongha. They were seated upon a low stool, and extended their legs across another of twice the height of their seat. In this way, a support was provided for the frame on which the piece to be embroidered was spread forth. Their faces wore a sickly hue; which was owing, perhaps, to close confinement and the unnatural position in which they were obliged to sit. The finest specimens of embroidery are, so far as my observation goes, done by men, who stand while at work—a practice which these damsels could not imitate, as their feet were small. They were poor, but too genteel, in their parents' idea, to do the drudgery of the humble housewife; and so their feet were bandaged and kept from growing beyond the limits of gentility. Their looks were not likely soon to attract a lover; and hence they were compelled to tease the sampler from the glistening dawn till dewy eve."

NEEDLEWORK NOTES.

A PRETTY and useful cushion is made of fine brown or white linen, with a slight design, or pair of designs,

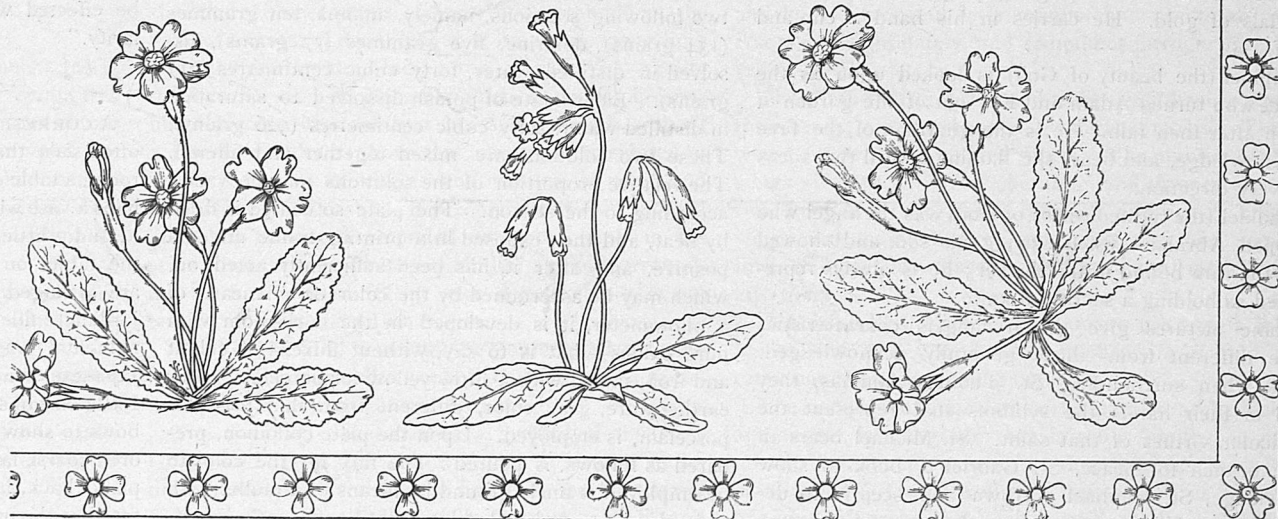
such as an ornamented square, or a spray of flowers in outline, lightly worked for the two sides; a running pattern in the same colored silk is worked on a strip of linen three or four inches wide, which is sewn insertion-wise between the front and back of the cushion. Bold pillow lace, tape



CORNFLOWER FOR NEEDLEWORK.

guipure, or, better still, cut-work—commonly called Greek lace—may be substituted for the embroidered insertion—indeed it will be handsomer; in this case the pillow must be lined with silk of the same color as the embroidery. This kind of cushion has front and back alike. Many require a back or reverse. Silk is the best for this purpose; it must harmonize with the ground or with the embroidery on the front of the cushion. If the main color of the embroidery be much lighter than the ground, the back will look best if nearly of the color of the latter. Rather a fine silken cord makes the best finish; it must not be obtrusive, and tassels are best altogether avoided.

A diaper of small leaves and flowers, or little trailing patterns of flowers on a powdering of small sprigs is a



COWSLIP AND PRIMROSE DESIGN FOR A TABLE-CLOTH BORDER.

suitable decoration for cushions. If a large flower be used, it must be restfully treated, and then it will look very well ; for instance, a large poppy sketched in red silk on a brown velvet ground.

It must be borne in mind that each object in a room that is ornamented with a pattern requires, and even insists upon, an effort of mind for its comprehension, and many people find it impossible to pass over anything. We must therefore be careful not to strain this demand on the observer to such an extent as to destroy the repose that is the most essential character of a home. It is a curious quality of needlework that it claims and arrests the attention to a much greater degree than any mechanical ornament. A small worked pattern on a tidy will attract the eye more than a gorgeously colored cretonne, and a chimney-piece drapery of an unobtrusive design in monochrome will make people look at it and think of it more than a piece of elaborately colored silk brocade applied to the same use. Embroidered dresses have, gone out of fashion for this reason ; the work may be beautiful in itself, but it is nearly always too conspicuous to please the best taste. Most embroidered dresses

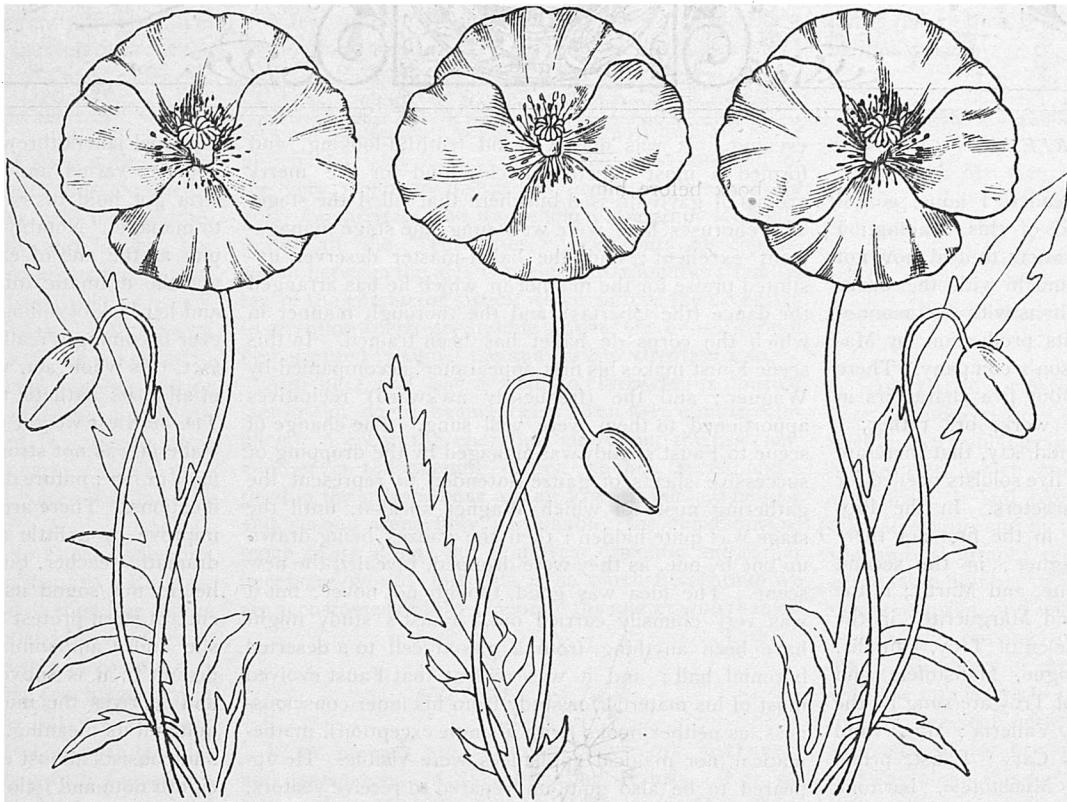
of the object for its service and position, and, secondly, of the ornament to the size, shape, position, and uses of the object. A small thing should not be dwarfed by

curious and difficult varieties of stitch, but in the expressive use of a few ordinary ones. The way in which a good worker sets her stitches, putting them close enough, yet not too close, varying their direction with the form of her pattern, and often making them express by the way they lie a great variety of form and even color, is the test of her skill, and it is as characteristic and personal as her handwriting.

Deep brown velvet curtains look well worked with large poppies — detached flowers alternating with a bud and leaf making a smaller sprig, not filled in, but done with a good amount of stitches so that the outline should not look bald. Simple line borders are worked at the top and bottom of the curtains, and all the work is done in one shade of bright red filose.

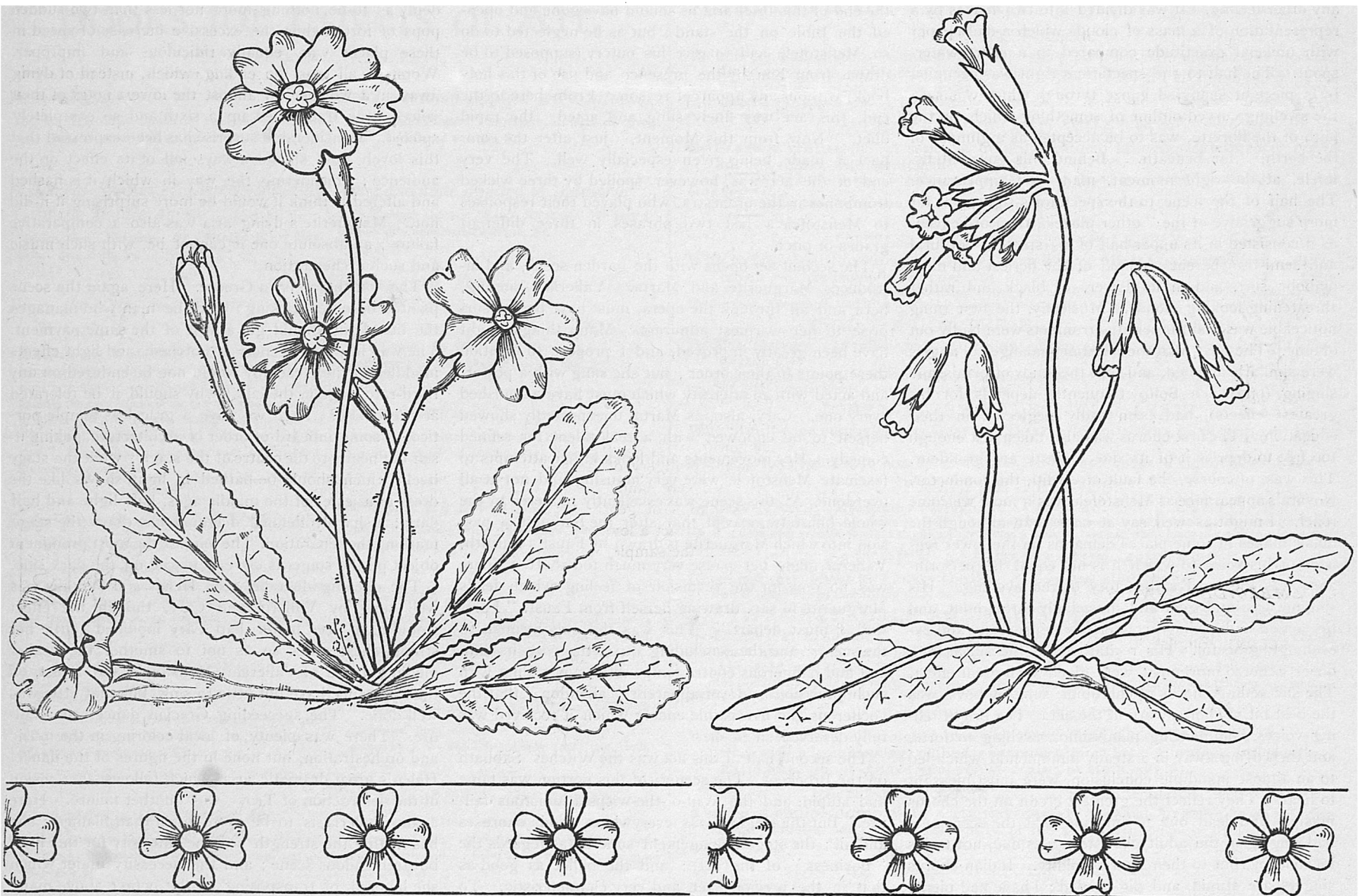
A remarkable embroidered table-cover was recently worked by the Decorative Needlework Society in London. On looking at the picture, many persons imagine that the cloth is embroidered with silver ; but this is not the case, the beautiful bright

effect being produced by very simple means. The material is cream satin, and the design is outlined in blue and green silks, while the ground of the pattern is filled



POPPY DESIGNS FOR EMBROIDERY.

too large or heavy an ornament, nor a large one cut up by a weak or inadequate pattern. Neither should much work be bestowed where it is too far from the eye to



COWSLIP AND PRIMROSE, WORKING SIZE, FOR THE TABLE-CLOTH BORDER ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE.

are failures, melancholy in proportion to the time and skill expended on them.

In the employment of needlework for decoration, the main thing to be secured is fitness or suitability ; first,

be easily appreciated, nor should an object that is always seen closely be so boldly treated as to be rough or coarse.

Excellence of workmanship does not lie in many

in with darning in shades of pale gold filose, thus leaving the satin to catch the lights. The border is of green plush, on which is embroidered a handsome antique pattern, harmonizing with and relieving the centre.